

AN ESSAY

ON

THE APPLICATION

OF

REFORMATION PRINCIPLES

TO THE

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT.

"Prove all things: hold fast that which is good."

NEW TESTAMENT.

BY JOHN KNOX, JUNR.

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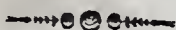
THE object of the following Essay is to investigate a question, respecting which much controversy has for several years existed, among ministers and members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.—The only motive of the writer is to elicit the *truth*, by adhering strictly to the point on which the Synod is about to be divided. Personalities or invidious comparisons of the characters and publications concerned in this question are carefully avoided, except in so far as reference is necessarily made to public documents, for the purpose of answering objections and correcting misapprehensions. The point at issue is—*Should the civil relations of church members to the United States Government be made a term of religious communion—or should members be excluded from church privileges for swearing allegiance to the United States Constitution, and for doing all the duties it binds citizens to perform?*

It is hoped that every reader into whose hands the following sheets may fall, will give them a candid perusal, and will find that the objections and sentiments there exposed, are fairly and temperately examined. As to the success of the argument in removing prejudice, correcting misapprehension, or producing conviction, the reader must judge. If the writer has failed to communicate his meaning, or to give a fair and true exhibition of Reformation Principles, on this controverted topic, he has failed to accomplish what was his only object.

REFORMATION PRINCIPLES

APPLIED

TO THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT.



EXPERIENCE has confirmed the truth of the fact, that Christian influence and political prosperity are inseparable. Some pious characters, however, think they cannot become citizens, or swear allegiance to the United States Constitution, consistently with reformation principles; because they consider that instrument to be *immoral* or *anti-christian* in its essential component parts. A few remarks on the arguments of those who thus object to the United States Constitution in its present form, will perhaps, show that it is not so anti-christian, as that members of even the purest church, may not swear allegiance to it, without committing any crime on account of which they should be excluded from her religious privileges.

Is it not a *false assumption* objectors make, when they argue that we are to receive as the *true moral* character of the United States Constitution, that which is claimed for it, or assigned to it, by the *majority* of the nation? Might they not with equal justice argue that we are to receive as the *true doctrinal* character of the Bible, that which is assigned to it by the *majority* of professing Christians? Should this majority be Unitarians, then, the doctrines of the Bible would be proved Unitarian, according to the assumed premises. Those who would not adopt the opinion of the majority, then, as the standard for interpreting the Bible, should not unjustly do so, with respect to the United States Constitution.*

Is it not also most unjust, to adopt the interpretations of Infidels, rather than of Christian Statesmen? Why not employ the former to interpret the Bible, as well as the United States Constitution, and perhaps *both* could be proved to be essentially immoral? Jay's Tripolitan Treaty, confirmed in 1797, is regarded by the objectors to the United States Constitution as the *true* interpretation of its moral character. But are they not aware, that opinions of individuals, or even explanations of Congress, form *no part* of the Constitution? It was framed several years before the Tripolitan Treaty was made, and in swearing the oath of allegiance, no Christian binds himself to adopt the inter-

* These and similar assumptions are made in Essays of the Albany Quarterly No's. 1, 2, 3, 4, and in other pamphlets of the same class.

pretations, or to support the opinions of *any* Infidel Statesmen. They are preferred to Christians, as interpreters of the United States Constitution, probably because the expositions of the latter would overthrow the system of the objectors.

If it be unfair, as objectors assert, to select a *few* favorable traits, and conclude from thence, that the United States Constitution is *moral*; it is still more unfair in them to select a *few* unfavorable traits, and thence argue that it is wholly *immoral*, when the *former* kind of traits far outnumbers the *latter*. But let *none* unjustly select a *few* favorable or unfavorable traits, as decisive of its Christian or anti-christian character; let the same rules of fair interpretation be applied to it as to the Bible—let its favorable and unfavorable traits be impartially weighed in opposite scales, and the *former* will be found by every impartial examiner, to have a vast preponderance in favor of Christianity.

Again, is it not another *false assumption* to confound the *Government* with the *Administrators*, as if both were but one and the same? Thus whatever crimes may be chargeable to any of the *latter*, are unjustly attributed to the *former*, and both are alike condemned, without discrimination. By this way of reasoning, the best government that ever existed, might be proved anti-christian. For the government of Israel, which was God's pure scriptural ordinance, was frequently administered by the most impious rulers, who were chosen through the influence of the people's wickedness, and not from any defect in that Divine Constitution. The *government*, however, must always be distinguished from the *administrators*, as the former, properly speaking, is the *Constitution*, or body of laws, adopted by a nation for regulating its political affairs.

The United States Constitution does not claim to be God's scriptural ordinance, like the government of Israel, which was instituted by the dictate of the Almighty. The former is an imperfect human institution, having even greater defects and immoralities belonging to it than those peculiar to the Constitutions of some Orthodox Churches. It is something like the American Temperance Society, which justly claims to be *moral* in its *essential* features, notwithstanding its defects or immoralities; and is well adapted to promote the end for which it was instituted. Its Constitution may have as few religious provisions as the United States Constitution contains. It requires no religious test, but admits Christians, Infidels, Slave-holders and all classes, to be members or officers, which they can be, without partaking in each others' crimes, or interfering at all with one another's religious differences, assumed rights, or distinguishing peculiarities. Christians can lawfully co-operate with all other classes in supporting *any* Constitution which does not bind them to do *some* sinful act, although it may not have such a *high* moral and religious character as they would desire.

For the scriptural and reformation principle respecting the civil duties of Christians is—*that they may yield allegiance to any civil Constitution not binding them to perform any immoral act, or to apply any law that is opposed in its nature to the divine law.* JOSEPH, DANIEL, SERGIUS PAULUS, and others, furnish practical and scriptural proofs of the truth of this principle. For they were approved of God in holding civil offices, and administering just laws under the worst of governments, where the *will of the despot* was the *supreme law*, to which every other law or constitution was merely subordinate.

If they were justified, then, in holding those offices, and in performing the civil duties belonging to them, there could be no harm in swearing to do so, and to yield allegiance to their governments, however bad, while they were required to do nothing sinful. The *extraordinary* nature of their circumstances does not at all change the principle, because *no* circumstances can justify what is sinful in itself.

The Supreme Lawgiver has delegated to civil rulers, as such, a *right to command what is lawful*, however bad characters they may sustain. A wicked parent does not lose his authority given him by God, to command his children to do what is right. Nor does his wickedness free them from their obligation to obey him in every thing he commands, that is not unreasonable or morally wrong. Just so it is with the civil parent, whose right to command all subjects (Christians not excepted) to do what is lawful, is implied in every divine precept that respects civil relations. But if Christians be required to do any sinful act, such as to profane the Sabbath, they will conscientiously resign their offices, and willingly suffer injury, rather than sin against God, or oblige subjects to obey any law that is immoral. The most eminent Christians and Reformers of all ages have practically refuted the doctrine of *passive obedience*. They rebelled against tyrants, to their own temporal ruin, refusing them obedience, that they might obey the Divine Lawgiver, and leave an example which, *in similar circumstances*, we should imitate.

Whatever difficulties might be in the way of Christians, to prevent them from swearing allegiance to despotic or hereditary governments; there can be none of the same kind in a republic, where the people all equally enjoy the full benefit of their own free choice. The religious defects of the United States Constitution are no just ground of objection, as no person is required to approve of them, but all have a *right* to vote for having them properly supplied. After briefly noticing the arguments founded on these defects, it may be shown that the United States Constitution does not bind its supporters to do any thing positively immoral.

That it does not expressly mention the Being or Providence of God, or the nation's allegiance to Messiah, is considered by objectors as an approach to national Atheism, nearly equivalent to

the nation's declaring itself independent of the Almighty.* Is not this an unwarrantable conclusion, as appears from the testimony even of avowed infidels? For President Jefferson, in his Messages and Public Addresses, declared as decidedly as a Christian could do, the *dependence* of rulers on the arm of an over-ruling Providence, for assistance and success in rightly discharging their public duties. That the Being and Providence of God are not *disavowed* then, but *implied* in the United States Constitution, is evident, infidels themselves being witnesses.— That it should explicitly acknowledge the same with gratitude; is readily admitted: and that this with other defects may be properly supplied by Christian influence, is an object both desirable and attainable. But none, except Christians, can be expected to vote for a religious reform, and therefore they should all exert whatever influence they possess, to accomplish this most important object, in the best and speediest manner by which it can be obtained.

The United States Constitution does not explicitly avow national allegiance to Messiah, but it contains nothing to the contrary; and this omission no more proves *it* anti-christian, than the same omission in the constitutions of some orthodox churches, proves *them* to be anti-christian. It does no more dishonor to "Messiah the Prince," or to the Creator, by such omissions, than the Temperance Society does by the same omissions: and in the Constitution of the latter, or at least in the Constitutions of some of its branches, there is not the slightest mention made of the Creator, or of the Messiah, whose existence and right to universal obedience are taken for granted without being mentioned. Yet no Christian on this account, pronounces the Temperance Society to be wholly immoral or "Atheistical," or refuses to give it his most cordial support in order to accomplish the *particular purpose* for which it was instituted, whatever other religious ends it may fail to effect.

* In the Albany "Prince Messiah," p. 25, the United States are declared to be "*a nation having no God.*" "Did the Convention that framed the Constitution *forget* to name the living God?" "It was not an *undesigned* omission." "It was a deliberate deed, whereby God was rejected; and in the true *Atheistical* spirit of the *whole instrument*, and of course, done with *intent* to declare national independence of the Lord of Hosts!" Again, p. 32, "WASHINGTON was President of the Convention that voted the *name* of the living God out of the Constitution."—"To be ashamed of Christ, as no one can reasonably doubt he was, is infidel." P. 31, "There is no satisfactory evidence that WASHINGTON was a *professor* of the Christian religion; or even a *speculative believer* in its divinity, before he retired from public life." Abundant evidence has been furnished, however, to show that he was a most exemplary moral character, and a *strict professor* of the Christian religion, both *before* and *after* his retirement from public life. (See "Life of Washington written for the American Sunday School Union, Philadelphia, 1832.) He would, therefore, scarcely sanction an *Atheistical Instrument*, "with *intent* to declare national independence of the Lord of Hosts," when he often explicitly declared the very reverse. Even the testimony of *avowed* Infidels proves that there was *no "intent"* to frame an "*Atheistical*" Instrument.

Again: when the United States Constitution claims to be the *supreme* law of the land, objectors suppose that it is designed to make the Divine law merely subordinate, and to renounce the Bible altogether. Let them observe, however, that its supremacy is asserted, not in opposition to the Bible or Divine law, but merely to all laws of *inferior authorities*, or of individual states. For the assertion is, that “the judges in *every state* shall be bound” by the United States constitution and laws as supreme, “any thing in the constitution and laws”—not of the Bible—but “of *any state* to the contrary notwithstanding.” Nothing more is implied in this assertion, than is expressed by calling a synod or general assembly—the supreme court, and its decision—the supreme law of the church, any thing in the Constitution or laws of any *inferior court*, to the contrary notwithstanding. The Bible is virtually the supreme law of the land, because the laws of the United States are pre-supposed to be moral in their nature, and all moral laws are *really* the laws of the Bible, whether it be mentioned or not, when they accord with the grand principles of equity which it contains.

The immorality of the United States Constitution, is farther argued from the fact, that it does not require a religious test, but admits Infidels and immoral men to office. How could it exclude them? If the people abuse their liberty of free choice, and elect wicked rulers, as the Israelites did, even the Divine Constitution they enjoyed, could not, and did not prevent the admission of those who were duly elected. For impious characters have no moral principle to prevent them from adopting the strictest religious test; as in some countries they are known to receive the Lord’s Supper, with the utmost apparent sanctity, to qualify them for office: thus adding solemn mockery to their other crimes. It is the voice of the people alone, and not the religious test, that can keep improper persons from places of power; and this is the very reason why all Christians should exercise their rights as citizens, to effect a civil reform. If the United States Constitution required them to choose Infidels, then they might justly object. But it gives them full liberty to use their utmost influence in obtaining “able men, fearing God, and hating covetousness,” to fill the places of power and trust. There is nothing in it implying any reason why *all* the governors should not be exemplary Christians. Every example of impiety in the rulers then, is an unanswerable argument against the system of the objectors. For if all Christians would act according to it, the whole management of civil affairs would be left to the Infidel and impious part of the community, and the awful consequences of Infidelity which the Atheistic Republic of France experienced, might justly be feared as the approaching fate of our highly favored country.

The immoral character of the United States Constitution, and

of the several State constitutions, is farther urged from the fact that they recognise the right of private judgment, and secure to every one the liberty of worshipping God as conscience may dictate. This provision is made, that none may be compelled to worship according to any form prescribed by the state, as the subjects of some other governments are unrighteously obliged to do, where the mode of worship is prescribed by the civil law. The civil authorities of this country, however, do not profess to *give* people a right to worship God in a way which his law forbids, as objectors unfairly argue that they do; nor do they attempt to interfere between God's law and conscience at all. They merely intimate that every one *has* a natural right, so far as the state is concerned, to worship God as conscience may judge most agreeable to his law, and on this right the state shall never infringe by prescribing the mode of worship.

Conscience is very properly introduced, not in opposition to the *Divine* law, but only to the *civil* law; for it is the *civil* right *alone* which is mentioned; and it is justly secured, that every sect of Christians may claim protection from the civil powers, when molested or disturbed by obtruders, in religious exercises.— Although this right is not specified in the most unexceptionable terms; yet it must be evident to every impartial reader, that none of the rights thus enumerated, were ever designed to extend any farther than the state is concerned, and should never be abused by turning liberty to licentiousness. Let it be also particularly observed, that this provision places conscience above the constitution, so that no functionary of the government can be compelled by law to do any thing contrary to his conscientious belief. A notable proof of this was afforded at the concluding session of last congress, in March 1833, when a motion was made in the senate to adjourn, and meet again on Sabbath, to finish the business. This motion was warmly opposed by several members who would do honor to any Christian society. They insisted on their right secured by the state, to act according to the dictates of conscience, which informed them that they could not meet on Sabbath, in ordinary circumstances, such as then existed, without desecrating that holy day, and setting an evil example to posterity. To the lasting honour of the senate, the motion was lost by the vote of an overwhelming majority.

Again, the United States Constitution is said to be immoral, because it affords equal protection to idolaters as to true Christians, and prohibits congress from making any law respecting an establishment of religion. Abuses no doubt prevail through improper administration; but the United States Constitution provides for nothing more than *justice*, in securing to all good, orderly members of the state, the full enjoyment of their civil rights, without taking their religious differences at all into the account. It very properly leaves heretics to the discipline of the church

and of their God, making no distinction between them and others on religious grounds, so long as they do their duty to the state, and do not introduce blasphemous principles or practices, subversive of that morality and good order which are essential to the peace, prosperity and happiness of civil society. The father of a family is certainly not guilty of immorality in liberally providing for the temporal wants of his idolatrous servants, when he first provides dutifully for all the wants of his own children. Is he not much more in the way of his duty, and much more likely to convert his servants from the evil of their ways; by thus treating them kindly, than he would be by putting them to death, or by depriving them of their natural rights, so long as they do their duty to him, and are guilty of nothing contrary to external decency? The United States Constitution marks out a similar course for the civil parent to pursue, by securing to christians all civil and religious privileges they can claim from the state; and by granting similar privileges to idolaters and to all others, until they are found guilty of blasphemy, or of some outrage on the morals and external decency of civil society.

The people of the several states have reserved to themselves the power of making laws for punishing transgressors of the *first*, as well as of the *second* table of the decalogue; and accordingly persons guilty of blasphemy, Sabbath-breaking, and profane swearing, have been frequently subjected to civil punishment. There is nothing in the United States Constitution sanctioning any of these crimes; and if they are practiced, it is solely on account of mal-administration. If the laws for punishing them too, are not sufficiently severe, nor strictly enforced, it is an additional argument why all christians should act the part of citizens, that the laws may be amended when necessary, and efficiently administered.

The article prohibiting Congress from making any "law respecting an establishment of religion," similar to those corrupt and unrighteous establishments in Europe, which make the church an unhallowed tool of state policy, is one of the very best provisions in the Constitution. It does establish the christian religion, however, in a proper manner, by protecting and supporting it; as several christian ministers are paid from the public treasury: and it may be made to afford much greater support in this way by christian influence, than it does at present. The Redeemer informs us that his "kingdom is not of this world," or not of a *secular*, but of a *spiritual* nature; and that it is established by spiritual weapons, rather than by the civil powers. Should the state then interfere farther with religion, than the United States government does by supporting and protecting it, the civil authorities would probably be assuming more power in this respect than the Redeemer has authorised.

The subject of slavery is the most difficult of all, and no one

is more opposed to that iniquitous system, or more anxious to have it abolished than the writer of these lines. But that the United States constitution does not bind citizens to do any acts positively immoral respecting it, is now to be shown. If it bound them to approve of slavery, or to engage in that nefarious traffic, it might justly be condemned at once, as wholly immoral in this particular. It does not *establish* slavery, however, as objectors argue that it does; nor does it contain a single article preventing or prohibiting the immediate abolition of that demoralizing system. The whole criminality rests with the slave holders, who would not delegate to the United States government the power of abolishing it by law without their consent. In 1808 Congress did exercise all the power delegated to it by the United States constitution, to abolish the evil, by prohibiting any importation of slaves after that date: but till then, Congress had no authority to pass this prohibitory act; nor has it a right *now* to interfere with the internal Legislation of any slave-holding state, in order to abolish the evil which there exists. It is no fault of the *constitution*, but of its *administrators*, that slavery still exists in the District of Columbia, where congress has full constitutional power to abolish it immediately. No Christian, therefore, should refuse allegiance to the United States Constitution on that account, as it was framed long before the section of country referred to, was formed into the "District of Columbia:" so that the United States Constitution cannot be charged with establishing the evil still practised in that district, as it had no legal existence until several years after the formation of the constitution, which does not contain a single article providing that the evil should be *there* continued.

The most obnoxious article of the United States Constitution, containing a general principle which embraces the surrender of absconding slaves, is "Article IV. Section 2. par. 3."—"No *person* held to service or labor in one state under the laws thereof, "escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or "regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor; but "shall be delivered up, *on claim* of the party to whom such service or labor may be due." Now it must be evident to all impartial readers, that this article has no particular reference to slaves. It applies equally to apprentices, and all other persons "held to service or labor." That the general principle is *just* and *righteous*, no reasonable or unprejudiced reader will deny. That the article is *absolutely necessary*, then, in a public document, such as the United States Constitution, containing *general* principles for regulating the civil polity of neighboring states, *although slavery had never existed*, cannot reasonably be disputed. The *general* principle then, is moral and correct; and the article could not be safely expunged from the United States Constitution, *even if slavery were totally abolished*. It therefore, does not

bind to do any thing but what is right, and of course, it presents no just ground of objecting to the United States Constitution, as an immoral instrument. Besides, both slave-holders and *anti*-slave-holders *approve* of the United States Constitution, and *swear* to support it. Could they do so, if it bound the latter to establish and support slavery, a system of which they most cordially disapprove? If it bound them to do any thing unjust or immoral respecting slavery, to which they are utterly opposed, they could never have adopted it. But it does not bind them to agree on that subject, about which they differ in the extreme. Slavery, then, is merely an *incidental* thing, not so much as mentioned in the United States Constitution. This instrument, is so generally, wisely, and admirably expressed, that it embraces every case respecting which legislation might be necessary. Slavery, then, is only a *particular case*, to which the *general* and *just* principle contained in the constitution, must necessarily be applied in existing circumstances. That it does not bind to do any thing but what is right, even in this *particular case*, is now to be shown.*

The immoral acts supposed to be enjoined on christians by the United States Constitution, respecting slavery, may be reduced to the following: It binds them to support the integrity of the Union, by suppressing domestic factions, which include insurrections of the slaves; and to give up absconding slaves peaceably, when demanded or apprehended by their owners. A few remarks may show that even these acts, however painful to humanity, are not immoral.

The public good and the safety of the commonwealth, as well as self-preservation, render it necessary to suppress dangerous insurrections, by which not only the slave-holders would be destroyed, but general calamity both to bond and free, would be the certain result. The free states are, therefore, obliged to aid in suppressing dangerous insurrections *for their own safety*, and not for the purpose of supporting the slave-holder in continuing his iniquity.

* This view of the United States Constitution is perfectly consistent with the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Chap. 29, Sect. 7, and 8, on errors to be condemned. It is there very properly declared to be a gross error to maintain, "that it is lawful for civil rulers to *authorize* the purchase and sale of slaves—or "that a Constitution of Government which *deprives* unoffending men of liberty and property, is a moral institution." These errors or immoralities, however, are not at all chargeable to the United States constitution. It *never* authorized the purchase or sale of slaves. For to *authorize* is to *give authority* which was not before possessed. But the United States constitution *never* gave authority to slaveholders to buy or sell a single slave. On the contrary, all the power it had, has always been employed to *prevent* them from doing that which they had no lawful right to perform, by sinfully continuing their nefarious traffic. It *never* deprived an unoffending man of liberty, for to *deprive* is to take away what was formerly enjoyed. Now the United States constitution never took away the liberty of any slave, but has done all in its power to *restore what it took not away*, and has actually restored thousands of slaves to the enjoyment of their natural rights. The immoralities condemned in the testimony are chargeable *only* to the constitutions of slaveholding states, which *legally auhorised* the traffic, and have given a license to *deprive* unoffending men of liberty.

ous system. But they cannot defend themselves and the Union, without defending him also by so doing; and he alone must be responsible for whatever evils the injured negroes are made to suffer. In all wise systems of legislation, the interests of the few must yield to the general good, and to the safety of the whole. It would not even promote the interests of the *few*, (for the slaves are a vast minority of the United States population,) to set them free by force or otherwise, until provision be made for improving their condition, and fitting them to enjoy liberty in civilized society. They would thus be much worse than at present, for many of them, when humanely treated, could scarcely be induced to leave their masters. Many who hold slaves, too, sincerely disapprove of slavery; but their circumstances render it impossible for them to get free of the evil at once, without doing more harm than good, not only to themselves and to the public, but even to the negroes. There can be no crime then, in preventing the slaves from injuring both themselves and the community at large by dangerous insurrections, until some rational and moral means be provided for improving their situation; and these means, it is hoped, both free and slave-holding states will furnish as soon as possible, by liberal contributions.

The free states are also obliged, in self-defence, and for the general good, to give up absconding slaves to their owners, that they may not be over-run with a dangerous uncivilized population—nor exposed to civil wars with slave-holders, by refusing to give up peaceably what they claim as their own. But although the greatest opposers of slavery are obliged to do so, even contrary to their own humane feelings, yet it does not appear that any immoral act is done, except what is chargeable to the slaveholder, and to him alone. For civil government is just like that of the family on an extended scale, as could easily be shown by tracing society through its various stages, back to its origin. Neighboring states, therefore, are just like neighboring families on their respective farms, who might form a bond of union if necessary, to prevent internal broils and foreign aggression, securing to each other the liberty of doing with their private property and servants, bond or free, as they might think proper. Should my neighbor's slaves then abscond, and come to my farm or my cellar, I would say to them, "I cannot allow you to remain here and tax me with supporting you, nor yet to support yourselves by stealing my property. If you leave my farm I will not inform against you, but should your master detect you, I feel morally bound to give you up, although no constitutional law existed on the subject. For I thus do an act of justice to myself and to society, and it is not *I*, but your *master*, who does *you* any injury. I am sorry for your wrongs, and shall use all just and moral means in my power to effect your liberation. But to free you at once, and cast you on society without any

civilization or means of improvement, would be the greatest injury could be done, both to yourselves and to the community. Go and serve your master faithfully, as the Scriptures require both bond and free servants to do, and you will thus best promote your own happiness, and soonest become fit for obtaining and enjoying freedom, by the aid of the moral and christian influence now in operation for your best interests."

No reasonable person would affirm that the opposers of slavery who thus act, are guilty of immorality by so doing: much less that they are *as* guilty of the evil as the slave-holders themselves. But they would be guilty of an immorality if they were to neglect their civil duties, refusing to give their utmost influence to keep "vile men" from getting "high in place,"—or neglecting to comply with those laws respecting an unavoidable evil, that are absolutely necessary to promote the peace, independence and happiness of the country. It is to be feared that if those who find most fault with the United States constitution, were very heavily taxed with absconding slaves, they would be as ready to give them up, and as reluctant to undertake a civil war for rescuing them from bondage, or to pay the price of their redemption, as the most devoted citizens. Besides, no citizen is obliged to seize, or pay attention to absconding slaves, except in so far as he is compelled by his own avaricious disposition, to accept of the reward promised by their master, for informing against them, and having them apprehended. They might escape from the states altogether, for any thing the United States constitution binds governors or citizens to do, were they not seized through the aid of those who are influenced by the promised reward. But when they are thus apprehended and claimed, the consequences would be evil, both in a natural and moral point of view, if the citizens of the free states should refuse to give them up peaceably to their owners.

It is vain to argue that there should have been *no* union, rather than the one which has been formed on the principles just referred to, which alone would satisfy the slave-holders, but which are supposed by objectors to be immoral. They argue that the "Thirteen Colonies" should have remained separate, and trusted in Providence who had delivered them from a powerful enemy, for future protection, rather than have formed a union on the principle of tolerating slavery; "*a principle as immoral as it is opposed to human rights.*" (See Essays in No. III. p. 31, Albany Quarterly.) If those colonies had contented themselves with barely trusting in Providence, without also using the *necessary means* to gain their independence, by joining in good earnest with slave-holders and all who would assist them, they would have discovered more faith than hope. They were guilty of much the same immorality then, in admitting them to assist in the revolutionary war, without first binding them to give up their slaves, as in ad-

mitting them into the union afterwards on the same terms, and for the same purpose of mutual defence. They were called not only to trust in Providence, as some of their leading men prayerfully did, but also to use the *necessary means* both for gaining and retaining their independence. Now the formation of the union was, the only *rational means* they had of securing their dearly obtained rights against farther invasions of foreign enemies, and against the ravages of civil war; both of which evils it has served remarkably to prevent, by the favor of Providence, which has abundantly prospered all their efforts. The farmer {who trusts that Providence will send him a crop without sowing, would be of much the same mind as the colonies would have been, had they not formed that union which has since yielded such an abundant harvest. *They* were not to blame because the British Government had entailed slavery on them as a curse, of which they could not free themselves. They chose the very least evils possible in their circumstances, and such as they could neither avoid nor do away; and if they agreed to give slave-holders more privileges and protection than they deserve, they could do so without sanctioning their crimes. The slave-holders have a right to claim that protection from the government for which they stipulated, so long as they pay their part of the public expense, and do their duty faithfully to the country, according to the agreement made at the formation of the union. The most violent opposers of the United States constitution will not refuse to form a partnership with slave-holders for promoting their own interests, as the free states did in framing the constitution. Enough has been said, however, to show that the acts which it binds citizens to perform respecting slavery, are *not immoral*, and therefore, there could be no immorality in forming a union on the principle that they should be performed.

If it is immoral to swear allegiance to the United States constitution, it must also be immoral to assist the United States army in battle; and yet every Christian is morally bound to do the latter, who enjoys the protection and civil privileges of the government. For the oath of allegiance requires nothing more than to renounce all allegiance to every foreign power, and engage to support the integrity of the union against foreign invasions or domestic factions. The United States constitution provides for defending and supporting the true religion, securing to all christians every civil and religious privilege they could desire. This is just what the reformers asked from the British government, and on obtaining their desired object, they cordially swore allegiance to it, without making any objections on the subject of slavery. And yet it was *then* carrying on the slave trade far more criminally than was *ever* done under the American government!! For the British had wilfully and avariciously commenced that iniquitous system before 1638, without *any necessary cause*; and forced it on

the American colonies as a woful legacy, which they were *compelled* to inherit. Were those eminent reformers here now, they certainly would not inconsistently refuse allegiance to the United States constitution on account of slavery, when they did not refuse it to a *hereditary monarchy*, far more guilty of that evil *when they swore to support it*, than this republic was even before 1808. They would *here* enjoy all the protection and privileges they ever desired in Britain, and would not be bound by the oath of allegiance, as we have seen, to do any thing immoral. Would they not be ashamed of those who claim to be their *only* legitimate successors, deposing or excommunicating their brethren *solely* for the "*error and immorality*" of believing that church members may swear allegiance to the United States constitution consistently with reformation principles, and for acting according to such opinions. This is the *only* "*New-light heresy*," or "*immorality*" for which they are denounced as the worst of reprobates, and backsliders from reformation principles. Enough has been said, however, to show that they have abandoned *no* reformation attainment by changing their erroneous views of the United States government. For unqualified opposition to it, as a constitution wholly immoral and "*atheistical*," *never was* a reformation attainment. It was an unhappy error that has long prevented many good christians from discharging the obligation of the British Covenants, which bind them to use all lawful means in their power for effecting the *civil and religious* reformation of mankind.

Who then are the true supporters of Reformation Principles, and the faithful witnesses for those sublime moral truths which have been sealed with the blood of thousands? Those who refuse or those who yield allegiance to the United States constitution? Who *does* (not *says*) most to fulfil the moral obligation of the British Covenants, by making the greatest sacrifices to effect the civil and religious reformation of mankind? Those who do nothing to support Missionary, Bible, Sabbath School and other religious or benevolent institutions, but who often do what they can to oppose them? Or those who bestow a great part of their labor and property to support all such reformation societies? Who does most to obtain Christian Governors—to suppress the immoralities of the land, and to redeem the injured negroes? We need not state that whatever good has been done in this way, citizens who support the United States Constitution have principally accomplished; whilst its opposers, who claim to be the only true Reformers, have done little or nothing.

They seem to think that the burden of Reformation attainments consists in bearing testimony, or in railing against the United States Government, and *against all who differ* from their own extravagant views; without reflecting that such a testimony may be *false*, and therefore *immoral*. Thus it may be false to assert that

the United States Constitution says, Congress shall do nothing for religion—or that it is “wickedness” for the United States Government to receive by treaty from the Pope, a just reparation for injuries long since sustained in his dominions, by the American vessels—or that the ministers who approve of the United States Constitution, do not reprove the *high* for sin, as they do the *low*! or that they do not testify against the corruptions of Church and State, wherever they know *real* immoralities to prevail.* It is easy to find fault, but difficult to correct existing evils, in the present state of society. Let those, then, who object so much to the United States Constitution, and to the free institutions of this country, publish their approved Constitution and system of civil polity, before they urge any farther the condemnation and abolition of the system that now exists. Let them submit *their* plan to the American people, and give them a year, or two years, to compare it with the United States Constitution, and to judge of its superior excellence. Let them be very particular in pointing out what *they* would do with Infidels, Idolaters and Heretics; whom they pronounce utterly unworthy of those civil rights

*In “Prince Messiah,” p. 24, it is asserted—“The constitution *positively* declares that *nothing* shall be done for the advancement of the Christian religion.” “Respecting the advancement of religion congress *shall never do any thing*.” “God Almighty says—civil rulers *shall* nurse the church. The constitution says, they *shall not*.” Where in the name of wonder, has the constitution made such *positive* and monstrous declarations? NO WHERE!!! It *wisely* declares that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion,” to support one sect of christians at the expense of others; as is done by European establishments; and this is the *only* article it contains on that subject: [See page 9, of this essay, on religious establishments.] But it is too bad to *make* the constitution say what it has *no where* said—that Congress shall never do *any thing* for the advancement of religion, or that civil rulers *shall not* nurse the church. Few governments have ever done half so much as the American to nurse the church in a proper manner, and to promote the advancement of the Christian religion.

Again, it is stated in Essays of Albany Quarterly, No. 3, p. 32; that —“By treaty with the King of Italy, (i. e. in fact the Pope,) the United States is to receive \$2,000,000 from Anti-Christ—buying votes.”—“This is wickedness.” Zach. V. 8. What wickedness is there in receiving even from Anti-Christ by treaty, a just reparation for spoliations he had committed on the American vessels?

Again: Essays of Albany Quarterly, No. 3, p. 31. &c. &c. “How silent,” (are some ministers) “about the degradation of 2,010,430 slaves!”—“When will the Ambassadors of Jesus reprove the *high* for sin, as they do the *low*?” Facts testify whether those who *refuse*, or those who *yield* allegiance to the United States constitution, *say* and *do* most with efficiency, to correct the evils of both *high* and *low*, and to deliver the slaves from degradation. Has any of the objectors to the United States Constitution ever paid for the emancipation of a single slave? Some of them are any thing but friendly to the “Colonization Society,” which is supported principally by citizens, and even by Slave holders: and which *has* done, and *will* do more to emancipate and moralize the slaves, than could be done by railing against the American Government to eternity. Should the example set by some slave holding states in contributing liberally from the public purse to pay for emancipating and colonizing the slaves, be universally imitated throughout the Union—should the sum be increased in proportion to the necessity of the case, and to the means possessed by the people of the several states; the total emancipation of the negroes might be effected, as soon as would be consistent with their own best interests.

which are secured to them by the United States Constitution,*—also what they would do with slaves and their owners, respecting whom it contains such immoral provisions. They might thus use the means in their power at least, to effect a civil reform; which can never be done by condemning and finding fault with every thing, good or bad, without active exertions like those of the genuine ancient Reformers. But they would perhaps find it difficult to correct one practical evil now prevalent, by abolishing the present system of civil polity, and substituting another of which they would approve: or to make a single alteration for the better in the United States Constitution, even on the subject of slavery. If they could only make changes for the worse then, they would perhaps do well to cease urging the abolition of the present system, which is evidently the best that the circumstances existing at its adoption would admit of; and use their utmost influence with other Christians, to have the United States Constitution properly administered, as the Divine Lawgiver requires, that he may bless and save our happy country.

Would not such a course be much more consistent with true Reformation Principles than the one which many of them pursue? For when they assert that the Government is fundamentally *immoral*, and that every thing flowing from it is also polluted, so that they can have nothing to do with it; they assume a principle which they violate almost every day they see, and to maintain which consistently, they would be obliged to go out of the world. Do they not *voluntarily* partake of the immorality and pollution, when they apply to what they call an *Atheistical* Government, and to its unlawful functionaries, for license to sell goods, or for deeds of property, and the like; doing almost every thing in relation to the civil authorities that other citizens perform, except voting at elections and sitting on juries? It can be proved that some of them are guilty of even *these last acts*, which are supposed to involve the height of immorality. How can they recognize such parts of the government as suit themselves, to be quite

* If they say the civil magistrate should cut off all heretics and idolaters by the sword, or inflict civil pains and penalties for religious opinions, that are not blasphemous, or dangerous to the morals and external decency of civil society, they will perhaps find they have taken an untenable position. They would scarcely assert that a man should *now* be stoned to death, for gathering sticks on the sabbath. If the civil magistrate should *literally* enforce the Jewish laws for punishing such offenders in New Testament times—Why did not Christ and his Apostles command the civil powers to cut off *obstinate* idolaters, and blasphemers, with whom the world was replete in the Apostolic age? Why did He and they on the contrary leave the greatest enemies of Christianity to be punished entirely by the *judgments* of Heaven, sanctioning the use of no *carnal* weapons for suppressing heresy or idolatry in opinion, but only “the Sword of the Spirit;” and the weapons of reason. If civil magistrates should cut off heretics who do no injury to Society, merely for their opinions, Alas for the cause of the Reformation! Popery and Erastianism would thus gain a complete triumph over it, since all supporters of the last mentioned systems who have ever persecuted dissenters for their religious opinions, acted according to the true spirit of this very principle!!

lawful, when their interests render it necessary so to do ; and yet pronounce the *whole* system an *immoral* or *unlawful* confederacy, with which true Reformers can have no lawful connexion, whenever any of their brethren act like some of themselves, by voting or sitting on a jury ? How can they drink, with a good conscience, from what they regard as an immoral and polluted source, just as much and as often as suits themselves ; while they denounce or excommunicate their brethren as reprobates concerning the faith, who like Demas, have loved the present world, with its loaves and fishes—although these brethren should *do* nothing worse, than simply to *think* that church members ought not to be excluded from religious communion for doing all the duties of citizens, and to act accordingly ?

Again, can they consistently, drag their brethren into vexatious law-suits, and that (according to their own reckoning) “ before the *unjust*, and not before the saints ? ” Do they live up to their professed principles, choosing rather to suffer wrong, or to allow approved saints the honor of deciding their controversies, than apply to what they pronounce *unlawfully constituted* civil authorities ? Is it not evident that on their principles the civil law is decidedly against them ? For, according to their sentiments respecting the government, they could neither fairly obtain a deed by law, nor legally hold chartered property, without violating their own principles.*

* That the principles advocated in this essay [and not those of the objectors] are the principles of the Reformed Presbyterian church, is evident from the Statutes enacted and published by her supreme judicatory in 1812, and since that period. These statutes show that the *synod* has not prohibited members, since that date, from swearing an oath of allegiance, or from doing any civil acts that do not involve positive immorality. The supreme court, however, has not specified what acts *are* and what are *not* immoral, but has left the decision of this point to “ Church Sessions.” The principles of the church then, are the *published statutes* of her supreme judicatory, whatever may have been the *common* opinion and practices of even the majority of officers, or of church members.

That the principles of the objectors furnish no *legal* ground to claim chartered property by the aid of what they call—the *unlawfully constituted Atheistical authorities of the land*, appears to have been felt and acknowledged by some of themselves. For the ground they assumed in a late controversy respecting Chamber Street Church, New York, according to the published report of the Vice-Chancellor’s decision, was to swear that Dr. McLEOD had obtained the charter in an improper manner, contrary to the doctrines of the Church, and without the authority or consent of the consistory. The Vice-Chancellor, however, states that the testimony on the other side fully established the *contrary* of what had thus been sworn by the complainants ; and proved that the charter had been obtained *with their knowledge and consent*, and that some of *themselves* had exerted their utmost influence to obtain it. By thus swearing what appears flatly to contradict the truth, they acknowledged that the charter was not, and could not be obtained on *their* principles, but on *those* which this essay attempts to advocate ; so that on their ground, they can have no legal claim to the chartered property, nor could they legally hold it, if they had it. The statutes of the Supreme Judicatory prove that the *principles* advocated in this essay, were the principles of the Church *at the time* the charter was obtained,—for it *could* not have been obtained on any other—and not a single law of the synod can be pointed out, that has been violated by obtaining such civil privileges, and performing all the duties of citizens.

Upon the whole, does it not *equally* become both those who *recognise*, and those who *disavow* the lawfulness or morality of the United States constitution, to guard most carefully against "clerical temptations," and against inordinately seeking "the loaves and fishes?" For it appears *both* are *equally* liable to be ensnared by the allurements which the honors and emoluments of this world present: and *have* actually received salaries for performing the duties belonging to civil or secular offices.

Are not both classes, then, equally bound to "pray without ceasing" "lead us not into temptation." Let neither class cease to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" and for every principle of sacred truth, or of civil and religious liberty, which the martyrs valiantly sealed with their blood. This blood circulates equally through the veins of *both* classes, as no one of either is known to be willing to relinquish a single reformation *principle*, but *all* are disposed to "buy the *truth* and sell it not." Some are more ready than others, however, to abandon *errors*, and not only to *say*, but *do* as much as possible, after the example of their Reforming Forefathers, to apply the British Covenants, that the civil and religious reformation of mankind may be most effectually promoted.

No one is *obliged* to swear allegiance to the United States constitution, but enough has been said to show that every Christian is "justifiable" in doing so, and does not thereby violate any principle of morality or religion. It is hoped, therefore, that all parties concerned in this question, will forget animosities and personalities, attending to *principle alone*, and bearing with each others' infirmities, preferring the good of Jerusalem to their "chiefest joy." This is the only method by which the spirit of *Christianity* can be manifested, the honour of religion promoted, and the blessing of approving heaven expected to rest on their proceedings. "Arise O God; plead thine own cause."

It is a very old book, and the text is very faded. The title is "The History of the County of York" and the author is "John Smith". The book is written in Latin and is a very important work. It contains a great deal of information about the history of the county of York, and is a very valuable source of information. The book is written in a very clear and concise style, and is a very good example of the work of a great writer. The book is a very important work, and is a very valuable source of information. It contains a great deal of information about the history of the county of York, and is a very valuable source of information. The book is written in a very clear and concise style, and is a very good example of the work of a great writer.